

Off the Ground (and Freely Bound)

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Summary

Will remembers his pa taking him to the circus when he was little. He remembers spun sugar and fire spitters and sword swallowers. Men on stilts so tall young Willy nearly grew dizzy peering up at them, wild animals seemingly tamed, unrestrained but for the callous lick of a whip. There were acrobats swinging on a trapeze, even tight-rope walkers.

He never recalls seeing anything as beautiful as silk dancers before his eighteenth birthday, though.

Notes

Day 25 of AU_Gust Prompts is: Circus

Will runs away to the circus and of course he meets Hannibal Lecter

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

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He never recalls seeing anything as beautiful as silk dancers before his eighteenth birthday, though.

His birthday coincided with the Fall Festival in middle of nowhere Lewisburg; the Louisiana summer bleeding into the fall so that they inevitably were drenched in sweat by the end of the night's festivities. His pa had brought him, despite Will's entreating pleas that it wasn't worth the fee, that he was no longer a child to be entertained in this way. Beau had shrugged off all of Will's denials, though, citing tradition and nostalgia, pulling a moody and reluctant Will into the Big Tent two days after he'd turned eighteen.

So much was the same as when he was a child, and so very much more was different. Gone was the youthful amusement the clowns and their antics incited within him. Nonexistent was his fascination with the exotic animals that were turned loose into the ring, performing runs and tricks for a cooing audience; now Will simply felt sorry for them, wished they had the ability to tear apart their captors and flee back to the wild where they could be *free*.

Will is still intrigued by the high-risk acts, though unlike before, when he'd cautiously watched them through the shelter of his fingers, he now sits entranced and enthralled, gazing longingly upon the artists and their daring feats of defying gravity and death.

It was the silk dancer that pulled him from himself, from the life he felt trapped within, even at eighteen. The same silk dancer he watched now, months later, as he neglected his clean-up duty on the other side of the lot to steal a peek through the back entrance into the main tent.

Will had never seen anything like it in all the times he'd been to the circus as a kid, but he remembers the first time he watched Hannibal and every time since. Remembers vividly the youthful body swaddling itself in silk, being raised higher and higher until he hung two dozen feet in the air, twisting and swinging, wrapping himself up and then dropping into a freefall, saved only from the unforgiving ground below him by the thin swatch of fabric wrapped around his ankle.

It had been easy for Will to decide to run, after that. He barely even recalls making the decision to; the memory of his fumbling hands stuffing clothing and what little money he'd managed to squirrel away from odd jobs into a ratty duffel bag and slipping away in the night as hazy and hectic as his heartbeat had been. He'd left behind nothing but a note to let his father know he was alright and not to worry about him, knowing he needed a clean break from his life.

He'd grown calmer by the time he was arriving at the campsite to meet with the proprietor of the travelling circus; one Bedelia Du Maurier, who was happy enough to accept Will into the fold of her organization for the trade of his manual labor. His mind had grown sharper with each step he'd taken away from their shitty little double-wide, from the stench of stale beer

and whiskey, from the man that would never let Will live a life of his own, if it meant keeping him around to pull the weight when Beau no longer could.

That had been months ago, fall blending into winter, and now the first tentative days of spring were trying to make themselves known. The circus had traveled all the way from Louisiana to the shores of some small, quaint California coastal town, and Will loved to watch the late evening sun filter in like bloody claws against the fine silks.

“You know you can come inside instead of lurking,” Hannibal’s voice surprises him, the other man not even looking at Will as he wraps two of the silks in his hands and *pulls*, propelling himself into the air with an ease and grace Will is constantly in awe of.

Will’s cheeks flush bright enough to rival the sunset, embarrassed at being caught gawking at the acrobat. He mumbles an apology, certain Hannibal doesn’t even hear him.

“It’s quite alright, Will.” Hannibal stills his movements, twisting his body, suspended a dozen feet up, to pin Will in place with a considering gaze.

Will gazes up at the performer, his eyes lingering over the corded muscles of his arms and legs, tensed to hold him perfectly steady and not even trembling with the effort. He wets his lips, after a moment, and comes back to himself enough to remember to avert his gaze. “Don’t you tire after all your shows? I’d be a brick on my cot right now, but here you are after hours of performance, *practicing*.”

A quick glance to Hannibal’s face sees the amused smirk that quirks his mouth, the playful glint in his eyes, “How do you think I’ve come to know such stamina?”

Will blushes again at the implication of the words, the indecent places his mind takes him as his gaze falls again on the toned muscles of Hannibal’s strong thighs. “Even still, I’m not particularly graceful. I don’t think I could manage the artistry you do.”

Hannibal’s smile grows even broader, and he starts a slow, twirling descent until his bare feet touch the ground again, and he shakes off some of the powder he uses to coat his hands and feet when he’s in the silks.

“Your body seems sturdy enough. Well made...” Hannibal teases, but something in his eyes is dark and prowling as he takes in Will from head to toe. “I’ve seen you around the circus, you must be strong to keep up with all the manual tasks expected of you.”

“I just clean up trash, you’re the real reason people are here. What you do is like magic, dancing in the air like it’s as easy as breathing.”

Hannibal is quiet for several seconds, looking at Will as though he’s considering something. “Would you like to try it?” He finally asks, and Will nearly chokes on the surprised laughter which erupts from his dry throat.

“I’d break my neck most likely,” Will scoffs, face burning as Hannibal drifts closer and reaches for his arm. Will doesn’t pull away when those graceful hands wrap gently around his wrist, moves closer to the silks with the mere encouraging tug Hannibal applies once.

"There's nothing quite like it," Hannibal purrs, raising Will's hand to brush along the material that ripples beneath his touch like fluid. The silk is cool to his touch, the older boy's hand a hot brand where it wraps around Will's. "Trusting something so delicate with your body. Your life."

"How do you summon the courage to take the leap?" He asks, disbelieving and dizzy with the realization that he's *actually* considering trying this.

"You don't," Hannibal murmurs, an edge of amusement to his voice. Will can feel the way his lips are twisted into a small smile where they brush against the shell of his ear. His body is a hot, solid line where he shifts closer to Will's back, his arm wrapping around Will to guide the hand at his side up to the silks as well. "You just take the leap."

"A leap usually implies a fall," Will notes sardonically, knows even as he does that he's going to do this, going to try.

"Just hold on."

Will's heart is fluttering in his throat like a wild, living thing; a bird beating its wings against the cage of his ribs and lightly powdered skin. He's alone tonight, and that ramps his anxiety up several more levels. As much as having Hannibal watch him when they practice causes him to develop butterflies in his stomach, doing an entire routine *alone* and without the performer's sharp eyes fills him with a trembling adrenaline not unlike fear.

What if he falls? What if he somehow ruins the intricate system of silks running all along the uppermost parts of the main circus tent? What if someone catches him? Bedelia already found them once, sending Will away with a clear enough threat that his building relationship with Hannibal could never become anything. The appeal of Hannibal was that he was something unachievable, a creature of grace and beauty and every man and woman who came to Du Maurier Circus would look upon him and want him, knowing he could never be obtained.

Will tried to distance himself from Hannibal after that, scared he'd be kicked out on his ass, or worse, that Hannibal would. Which makes tonight all the more terrifying. He wants to practice so he can surprise Hannibal with a routine he developed inspired by the other man's effortless performances, though he knows he'll never be able to do the silks the justice they deserve. But he wants to show Hannibal all those lessons, all that time spent teaching Will, wasn't in vain.

"*Just hold on.*" Hannibal had told him that first night, and it's what Will holds onto now as he twists his hands in the silks and pulls, propelled into the air by the force. He wraps his elbows around the ribbons first, letting them hold his weight as he does a split in the air. He keeps his toes pointed, as Hannibal had shown him, and then pulls himself up even higher before reaching for another ribbon, this one going around his waist.

He gets lost in the routine for several moments, wrapping and unwrapping high above the ground. Finally, he lets the silk around his waist unspool, and he launches himself at the

ground as it unwraps, the ribbon stopping mere inches from the ground with Will's back arched away from it.

There's soft clapping coming from the corner of the tent, and he hurries to hurl himself from where he's tangled in the ribbons, trying to put distance between himself and the obvious evidence of what he'd been doing.

Just as he's prepared to let an excuse fall from his lips, he sees Hannibal's smiling face, his hands still coming together in applause. "Excellent form, dear Will. I see you've been listening to my tips on technique. We'll make a ribbon dancer of you yet."

Will urges his pounding heart to slow, the sudden terror he'd felt at being discovered morphing into the jittery thrill of being near Hannibal. "No need to exaggerate," he knows his smile is weak, can hear for himself the evidence of his shaky breath. His stomach twists when Hannibal saunters forward.

"I have every faith in you, Will. In fact, it's dawned on me that perhaps the two of us should collaborate."

Will can only blink at the beautiful man before him, numb with shock. He can't help but imagine what they might do together, the way they'd share the silk, dance around and with each other high in the air. His cheeks flame at the thought, though he couldn't exactly say why. "Bedelia would never allow it."

"You'd be surprised what Bedelia would allow, given the right incentive," Hannibal informs him, stepping closer still. Will is forced to take a stumbling step backwards or risk their chests brushing together with each breath.

"I'd only slow you down. Half of your routine is *way* too advanced for me -"

"We wouldn't do *my* routine, dear Will. We would create one of our own. Together. One that showcases *both* our strengths."

Another step forward, another step back, and Will realizes as the silk brushes the back of his thighs that Hannibal has been *corralling* him.

"Do you know what one of our greatest strengths is, Will?" Hannibal leans close, a small smile quirking his lips when the action has the desired effect and Will shifts back to sit in the hanging loop. Hannibal's hands come up to grip the material hanging on either side of Will's head, dipping his own closer still. "It's teamwork. Synchronicity. We can anticipate each other. Just as I know your fear, you know my weakness."

Will stares in Hannibal's warm, amber eyes, mentally cataloguing every flawless movement he's had the pleasure to witness. "You don't have any weaknesses," he counters.

"I have one," Hannibal assures him, and his smile only broadens at Will's huff of disbelief, fondness filling his eyes as they dart from Will's own further down his face, lingering on his mouth as Hannibal puts his grip on the silk to good use and pulls Will the remaining distance.

The kiss is soft and brief, Hannibal *so warm* beneath Will's lips that he immediately feels bereft without it as soon as Hannibal leans back. His gaze flits over Will's expression, cataloguing the response his bold move has incited. Will can only stare at him dumbly, mind still attempting to catch up to current events even as it spins merciless circles with fragments of thoughts uncontrollably; how that was his first kiss, how he never realized that the pull he felt toward the other man was rooted so deeply in an attraction far more encompassing than the physical.

How badly he wants to lean forward, to feel the press of his lips again.

How even the thought of doing so instills a familiar terror in him, not unlike every time he trusts his body to the silks.

Hannibal must discern at least some of this from Will's reaction, or he really can anticipate Will as much as he'd claimed, because he seems to settle - correctly - on the decision that Will enjoyed it, and leans forward to do it again.

Will's lips part with his gasp this time, and Hannibal slips into him easily, his tongue quick and confident but still so gentle when it rubs along Will's own. Will doesn't know how to participate, exactly, though he *aches* to, and settles for meeting each of Hannibal's caresses with one of his own. Hannibal's pleased hum reverberates through their mouths, and then his warm, graceful hands are at Will's face, cupping his jaw tenderly, guiding his head to the side some, and then the kiss deepens, and it's Will's turn to make a sound - some wounded, strangled gasp that Hannibal drinks down eagerly before finally pulling away to allow him space to breathe.

He rests their foreheads together, and Will relishes in the proximity, his breath puffing from him in a shaky pant. "Beautiful thing," Hannibal murmurs, and it sounds like praise and chastisement both, "I've longed to do that for months."

"Really?" Will blurts breathlessly, amazed and thrilled to discover the acrobat has been just as enthralled with Will as Will has been with him.

"Of course," Hannibal purrs, a smirk twisting his lips as he slips his fingers through Will's sweaty curls, ghosts them down the length of his neck. "Every day has been filled with thoughts of you. Every minute watching you twist in silk has conjured visions both lovely and...improper."

Will's cheeks burn hotter at Hannibal's words, at the way his eyes roam the length of Will's body, nestled comfortably in the silk swing. He's alarmed to find himself hard in his trousers and is glad for the hands that have been sitting uselessly in his lap, now a shield from Hannibal's scrutiny.

"You've felt it as well," Hannibal continues. It is not a question, and Will doesn't bother to refute it. "Even now, you ache for me as I do for you. Perhaps in a way you've never before yearned for another. A pleasure never before experienced."

"I've... *known pleasure*," Will mutters, eyes cast to the side in embarrassment. "Just..."

“Not with another,” Hannibal finishes, not only completely unfazed by the topic, but also having the gall to sound unbearably *pleased* at the notion. “But you want to with me.”

Again, it’s not a question, and Will can only swallow around the lump in his throat and give a shaky nod, a weak sound pulled from him when Hannibal wraps long fingers around Will’s wrists and pulls them up, guiding them gently to wrap in the silks at his sides as he had that very first night.

He’s exposed now, and his pulse only quickens as Hannibal’s eyes move from pinning his own in place to dragging down his body, settling eventually on Will’s crotch where his pants are bulging obscenely. Will looks away, blushing furiously, but notices an answering hardness in the thin material of the skintight leggings Hannibal wears to perform in.

Once he notices it, he can’t seem to look away, hearing Hannibal huff a soft laugh that draws his eyes back up to the mischievous amber of Hannibal’s intense gaze. “May I kiss you again?” Hannibal asks, so polite and so kind that it makes something in Will’s chest clench. He nods again, silent, tipping his head up to accept another kiss.

It starts off chaste, but turns filthy quickly, Hannibal moving so he can hold both of Will’s wrists with one hand against the silks, the other hand shifting to cup Will’s cheek and hold him close. He squeezes around Will’s wrists and Will whimpers into his mouth, knows Hannibal means for him to keep his hands wrapped up in the soft material.

When Hannibal is sure Will won’t move, he smirks against Will’s lips and removes his hand from Will’s wrists, drags it down his arm, his neck and chest, palm settling heavy and hot against his lower abdomen.

“Will -” He begins, but Will knows what he’ll ask next, and nods desperately in answer. Hannibal chuckles again, his fingers teasing dangerously close to Will’s crotch. “I’m afraid I need to hear it, Will.”

Hannibal’s eyes were so earnest, so seeking, that Will knows he isn’t trying to make Will feel awkward or uncomfortable. Quite the opposite; Hannibal wants his consent, wants Will to want this just as much as he does. It’s enough to loosen his tongue, though his cheeks are bright crimson as he responds.

“Please, Hannibal. Touch me.” He can’t bring himself to say anything more specific, to ask Hannibal to touch his *cock*, but it’s apparently all Hannibal needs. He works his hand into Will’s pants, pulling them down just enough to reach inside and free his cock from the confines.

“*Fuck,*” Will whimpers, already overwhelmed at just the gentle caress of Hannibal’s palm, surprisingly soft, where it rests along Will’s heated flesh.

Hannibal looks at him hungrily, like a wolf that would consume him in his entirety if left to his own devices. The shifting, prowling creature in his eyes seems to disappear, however, between one blink and the next and Hannibal is again looking at Will with something like awe. It makes Will’s stomach tighten and his thighs quake, and he flexes his hands where they still rest above his head in the silks.

“You’re so gorgeous, Will. You undo me each time I see you, test even my unending patience with the desire to touch you, to know you as no other has.” Hannibal leans close again, whispering the words into Will’s curls and then trailing his lips along Will’s jaw, nipping lightly before claiming Will’s lips again.

It’s in that moment that he properly takes Will in hand, squeezing his cock inside the warmth of his fingers and palm, and Will gasps into Hannibal’s waiting mouth, sighing his pleasure into plush lips.

He believes Hannibal, though everything within him desires to argue. Hannibal is so mature, so well established in a life he’s created for himself, that he *controls*. The idea that someone such as Will could come along and unspool any of that, that he could be responsible for stoking *desire* within a boy such as Hannibal Lecter is enough to have him on the precipice of his release faster than he’s ever managed.

“Hannibal,” Will is breathless, pleading between panting puffs of air they share in this intimate place of shared breath and the body-warmed silks he’s still cradled in. He arches up into Hannibal’s touch as best he can, feeling the smooth grip, so self-assured and steady as Hannibal moves his hand in perfect timing up and down Will’s shaft.

“Are you close? Will you come for me, darling Will? I want to see it, want to be the one to bring you to such divine heights.”

Will moans, desperate and entreating, and Hannibal *continues* to speak, filth spilling from his beautiful mouth in a mix of English and his mother tongue, which Will vaguely recalls is Lithuanian.

“You’re the loveliest boy I’ve ever met, so perfect for me, you look wonderful like this. I’d taste you if you’d permit me, Will. Wrap my lips around you and show you true heat, how good the touch of another can be. I’d sink inside of you, let you pierce me as well if you so desired...”

His words grow more broken, more heavily influenced by his native language, and Will can hardly make out what he’s saying as he hurtles closer and closer to his peak. Even still his words are soft, though, filled with adoration and heat, and Will feels his orgasm approaching, his thighs clenching and his stomach fluttering with the heavy arousal sitting warm and thick within his veins.

“Gonna come,” Will warns, any further words stolen from him by Hannibal’s mouth crushing down against his own, consuming him in a kiss full of passion and desire. Will throws himself into his release when it finally comes, his body slumping forward, Hannibal’s strong arm wrapping around his shoulders to keep him steady even as his hand, that wonderfully silken hand, remains wrapped around Will’s cock, pulling every last drop from him until Will is whimpering in oversensitivity.

“Shh, shh. I have you, Will.” Hannibal whispers into Will’s temple, pressing a soft kiss there and then peppering kisses down Will’s cheek until he’s able to take his lips again, their mouths pressed hotly together. Will slowly collects himself in fits and starts, nearly thrown back into full-blown arousal again when Hannibal pulls away from him enough that Will can

not only see a damp spot in the other boy's pants - before he's even able to offer reciprocity - but also can watch as Hannibal licks up Will's spend from his palm.

What isn't captured on his pink, greedy tongue is promptly wiped against the swath of silk that cradles Will, and even with his body still buzzing with pleasure, Will gapes at the action.

"You've dirtied it," he points out, voice shaking and breathless.

"I've made it *ours*," Hannibal refutes proudly. "Now your scent will be with me always, even when you cannot."

Will's heart clenches in his chest at the sentiment, his stomach twisting with a pleasant warmth that should be impossible so soon after his release. "Hannibal -"

Hannibal silences him with a kiss, licking into his mouth, spreading the taste of Will on his own tongue, and Will meets it greedily. "Stay with me," Hannibal murmurs, entreating.

"You want me to stay in your trailer tonight?" Will expands for clarification. Even as he speaks the words he imagines falling into bed with Hannibal, how wonderful it would be even just to lay wrapped in each other's arms, to wake up beside him.

"Tonight," Hannibal agrees, tipping his forehead against Will's, brushing their lips together briefly, "All nights."

Will's head bobs with his nod, the motion naturally pressing their lips together once more. There still remains a piece of him that is wary of Bedelia Du Maurier, still clings to the fear of the wrath the two of them might incur in defying her. But Will is certain now that if one of them is turned out, the other will follow. And that's all the reassurance he needs to let go.

After all, he has something irrefutably stable to hold onto now.

End Notes

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'Til next time!   BellaRai

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